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A BLONDE TO LISTEN
TO MUSIC BY
DON'T STIR WITHOUT STELLA
BENCHED WITH BERNADINE
GABY TRIMS HER FIGURE
A WELL-ROUNDED PERSONALITY







HIGHBALL

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A BLONDE TO LISTEN TO MUSIC BY

The promoters of music albums have given us melodies to do practically everything by: music to wash the dishes, to do the floors, to clean up the Jaguar, to empty ashtrays by, ad infinitum. But it took blonde, blue-eyed, and very, very buxom Brigitte Eckner to come up with the best promtion of them all: a girl to stand by and listen with!





Actually it's not exactly as it may sound. You see, Brigitte is the part owner of a swinging record shop — and she lets her more enterprising customers invite her into one of the audition booths in order that he may enjoy the music more. We're quite sure just what this has done for the advancement of music appreciation, but one thing remains damned certain: Brigitte can move more records in a single day than the average stevedore. Seems that after the small sampling of Brigitte to listen to music by, all the guys just plain buy.

It's no wonder, either, that sales are booming at the olde record shop. Brigitte fills her quota and then some almost as well as she fills her sweaters, bras, etc etc.





A music lover herself, Brigitte boasts one of the finest collections of old jazz records in Hollywood, where she makes her home. Laughing about some of the silly promotions of music to blank-







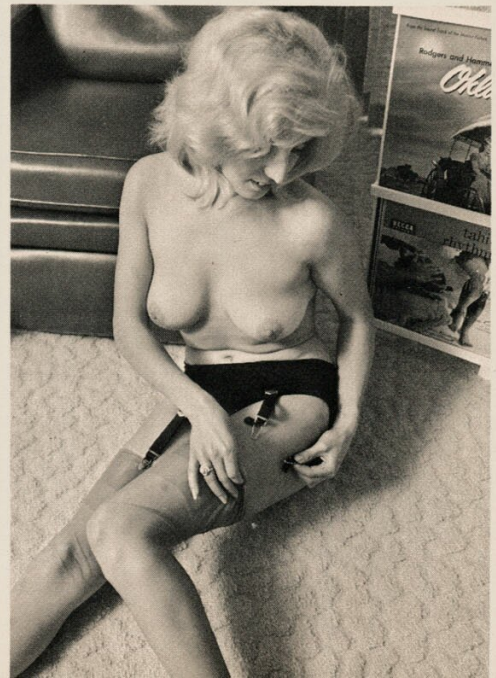
blank by, Brigitte says she's even tried it herself. For example, she uses the tunes from *Singing in the Rain* to shower by, *Little Brown Jug* to cocktail by, and the theme music from Tom Jones to entertain by.



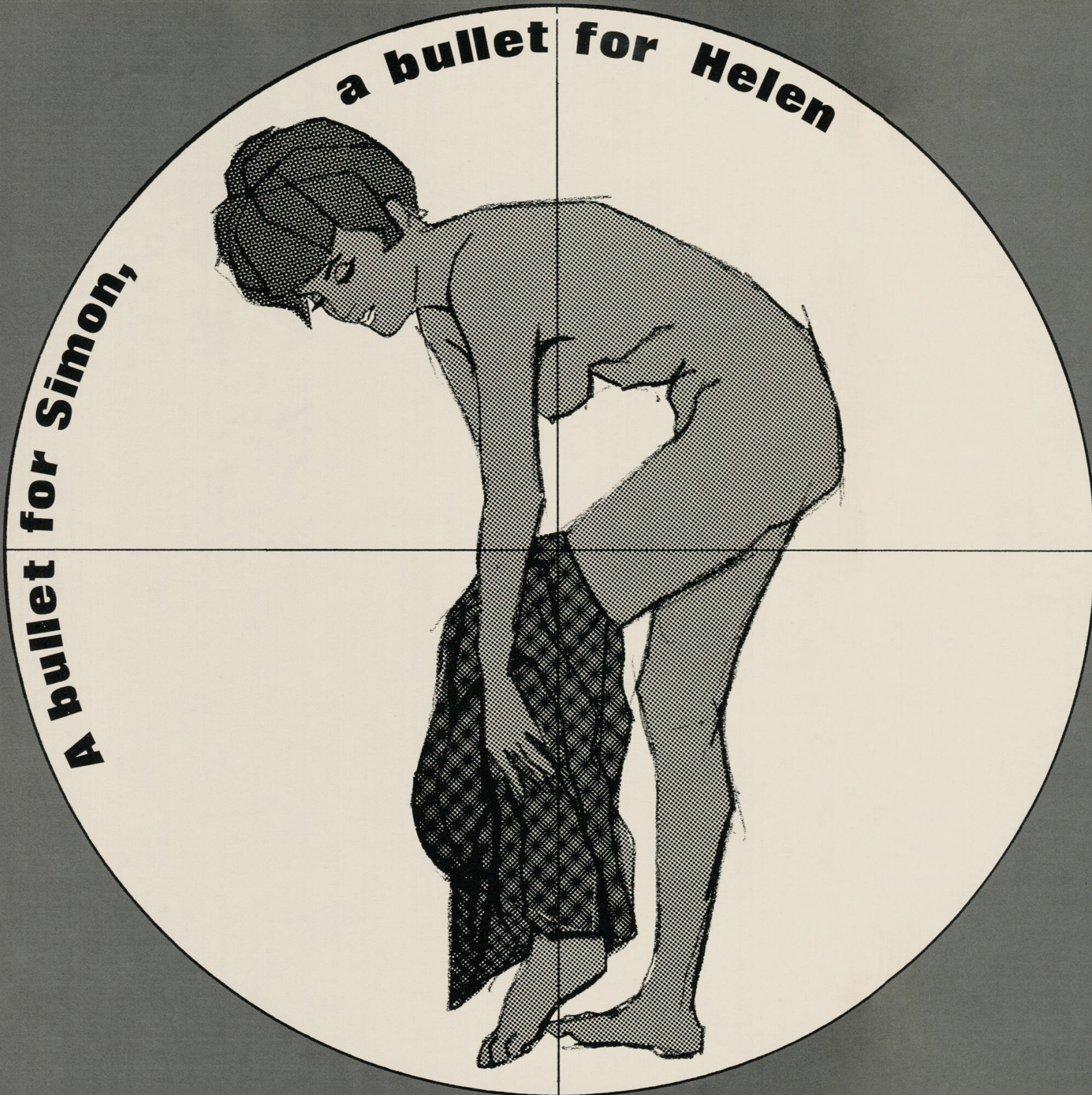




The one theme she never has to use however is that old ditty all alone on the shelf. Brigitte has the very obvious charms that would make idiots of us all if we ever left her alone! And we're tone deaf!







**Hate is a two
way street,
and only
the dark-suited
man walks
both ways!**

BY PETER KEVIN

Simon Breedwell wheeled his chair around the big mahogany desk and glared at the young man seated in the overstuffed leather lounge. "Is that all? You come in here to report on my wife and dare tell me she has a lover? Damn man. I know that already. I hired you to find out just who he is, where they meet, and when. Now if you can't give me that information, get out!"

"But I can give you that information, Mr. Breedwell," the young man said, half rising from the chair. He wanted to stand up whenever the old man came close and stuck his cigar-smelling face close to the smooth cheeks that were his own. "I found out that your wife meets one Harry Ryer, a steelworker on one of the big construction jobs downtown. Usually they meet at the Elsinore on Wednesdays and Sundays. I've got the place all staked out and my cameraman is ready to grab a few incriminating pictures just as soon as you give the word."

Simon pushed his wheel chair back a few paces from the young man. "Sit down. I can't stand anyone looking down on me like that." The young man sat down as ordered. "You'll hold off your cameraman for the time being. I want to play a little game with her before I throw her back out on the street."

"Is that all, Mr. Breedwell?" the young man said, noting the cripple as he sunk back into some forgotten reverie.

Breedwell looked up and nodded curtly. "I'll call you when I'm ready."

After the young man had left, Simon scooted back to his dominating position behind the big desk, extracted a cigar from the inlaid humidor and thoughtfully lit up. The smoke curled around his head, swirling and dancing in the sunlight that slitted through the curtains behind him. He brushed it away from his face as if the act of doing so could somehow brush away the bitter frustration of his life.

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dig those kooky sports!

LIKE MAYHEM IS IN STYLE

ANYONE FOR SUICIDE?

In Cyprus Gardens, Florida, a young man grabs the ring on a giant kite, gives a signal to the driver of a high-powered speed boat and goes whipping across the water on his water skis. Within minutes, he is airborne, up, up, fifty, sixty, seventy-five feet in nothing more than the aforementioned kite.

In Van Nuys, California, another young man hitches on a trick parachute, runs out a long line to the rear of a car — presto! He's up in the air, too, with nothing more than the chute to keep him from tumbling to screeching halt that would only leave a few grease spots to bury.

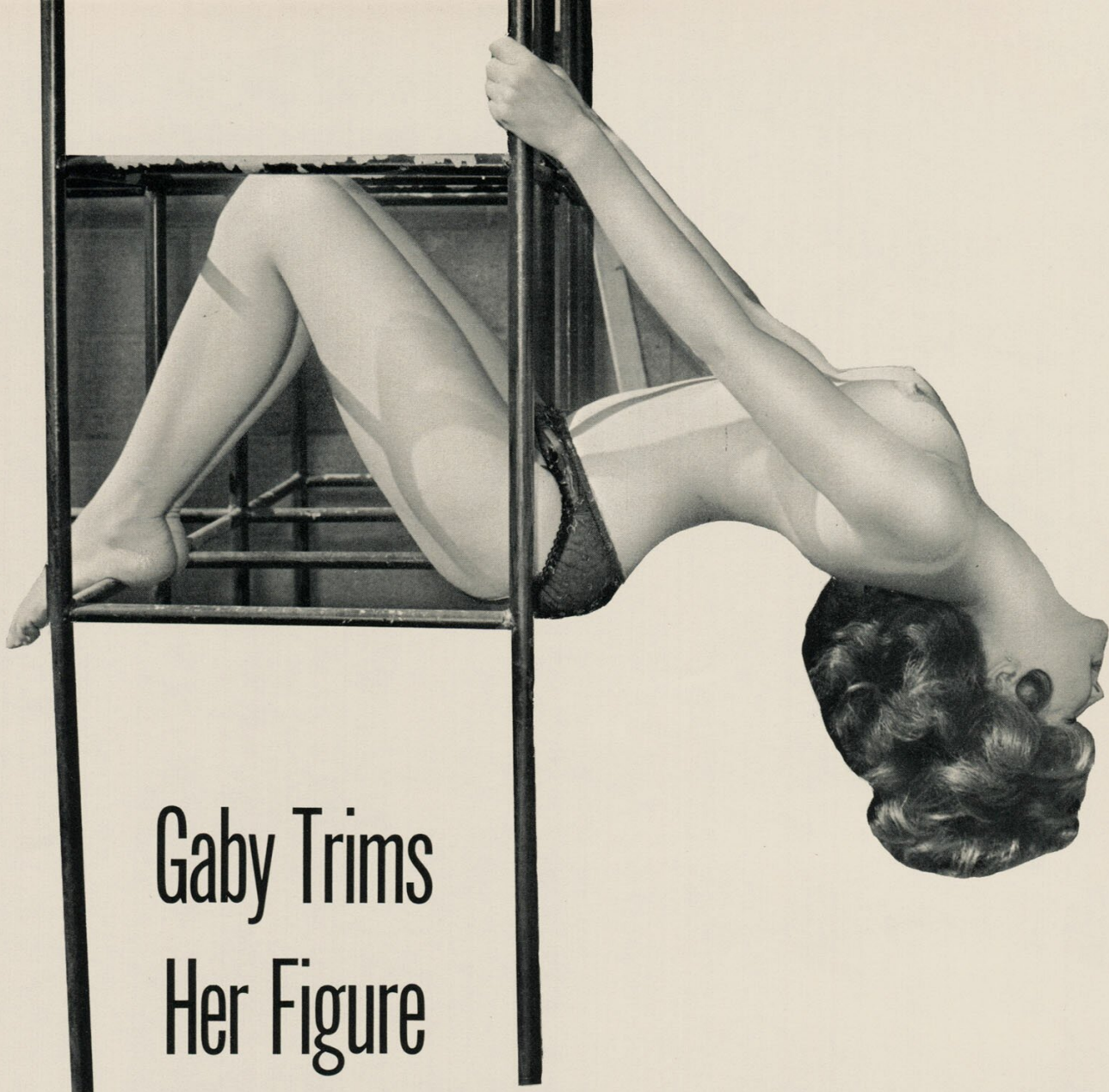
Up in Minnesota, a whole group of kooky young men decided that the normal rigors of sports car racing were just not game enough for them. Solution? Racing on the slick cold surface of a frozen lake.

Back in California in the meantime, another group of guys have discovered that surfing is a helluva lot more fun when the course runs through the pilings of a low pier. The winners in that particular kind of aquamania? Every-one who makes it through the pilings.

Now America has always been known for its daring young man. He's fabled in song and story from the man on the flying trapeze to the derring-do of Paul Bunyon and Company. But compared to the present trend to dangerous sports, the swinging exercises of the former and the legends of the Minnesota giant are as mildly exhilarating as a Sunday ride atop old Dobbin.

All of which seems to belie the worries of politicians and others who are busily fretting about the "softness" of Americans. But on the other hand, the craze of the really

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Gaby Trims Her Figure

When Gaby first walked into the editorial offices of HIGHBALL one day last month, she did not come as a prospective model, aspiring actress, learned writer, or talented artist. She came as a bookkeeper! Well it quite obviously turned out completely different for all of us.

Gaby got the job she was looking for. That is, looking after our books. But one day one of our top lensmen walked in, complaining bitterly about a bill he claimed was not paid. "Take it up with the bookkeeper," our chief editor cried out at him and, sending him out of the work area, forgot all about the incident.



Expecting, of course, that our new bookkeeper would straighten him out in short order, the chief waited for the photog to return. Hours went by and no cameraman.

Investigating, he found that not only had the lensman vanished from the premises, but our new bookkeeper as well.



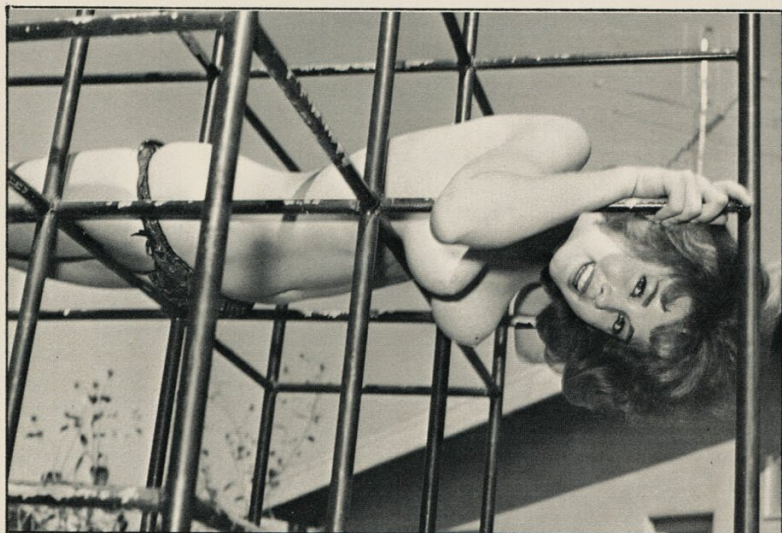
Infuriated at this crass disregard for professional ethics, the chief called the photog's studio and demanded to know what had happened to our bookkeeper.

"She's here," he cried. "Where have you been hiding her? I have waited all my life to photograph such a doll. I'll return her in the morning." And with that he hung up.









Only trouble, of course, is that Gaby never came back. She's become so fond of those monkey bars to keep her figure neat that she's turned to modeling as a career. Well, we may be out a bookkeeper, but the photog did have the courtesy to give us the prints of Gaby as she was exercising away at that trim, neat, lovely, gorgeous (38-22-34) figure of hers. The photog's bill? Hell, he paid us!









kooky sports!

far out and dangerous pastimes of the present may be the reason for them. Any quick look at the sports pages will show that athletes today are tearing up the old record books in every field from track to baseball. At least the top pros are. And there may be the answer to the reason for the normal guy's sudden interest in kooky sports.

The word for it, we'll say with a polite nod to Freud and others, is compensation. What it means simply is that the guy who has to climb mountains without training, race motorcycles over the desert, or jump from planes for the sheer joy of it, is doing it only to take away the stigma of being such a lousy slouch most of the time. The fact is he is getting soft.

Most of the participants in the nonsense activities that, only a few years ago, would have qualified the guy as a ripe candidate for a strait-jacket, compensate for not walking fifty miles every day by taking the car out to one of the places where, once a week, he can scare the living daylights out of himself—and feel damned athletic about the whole bit.

Be that as it may, kooky sporting activities are with us to say, along with overlong Detroit iron, television westerns, disc jockeys, Democrats, and the guys against Democrats. In short, the suicidal endeavors of week end warriors have become a part of the American scene.

It's not that we would change it one whit, mind you. Certainly

not any more than we would eliminate beer in cans or girls in short-shorts. There is a worry about the trend, however, that may never show up on a Rorschach or a Trendex: the effect on the future generation!

Consider the poor joe of ten or twenty years from now who is forced to listen to the tales of his father's sporting activities. And think of the damage those tales would do his psyche. Like how would he top some of these present day psychotic sports?

Aside from the previously mentioned pastimes of racing on ice, motorcycling over the dry dunes of uncharted deserts, flying behind a boat or a car on a kite or a parachute, there are other forms of currently well organized mayhem. And at least a few of them

are classed as genuine athletic competitions.

Naturally those latter ones are not nearly so screwy as some we'll mention later. Like water polo?

The requirements for this sport are easily described. A mere competitor has to have the build of a youthful Charles Atlas, the swimming ability of a Johnny Weissmuller, the sheer brawny power of a Les Richter and others in that gridiron company, and, of course, the speed of a barracuda and the basketball dead-eye shooting of a Chamberlain. What's that? You say you don't qualify? Then, brother, stay away from almost any water polo match.

Can't swim? Well, the variety of sport in most bone banging forms is not limited to the natatorium. Providing you like body contact, you might want to try the game politely called "association football," better known in the fracture wards as soccer. Consider it, in a damned rough sort of way, as being just like our own football—except that there are no timeouts, no pauses between goals, plays, or weather. Even the ambulance attendants have to time their moves to remove bodies from the playing field so as not to get run over. And just to clinch this bit of kookery—the players all wear short pants!

Naturally, or unnaturally if you prefer, there are a host of other fully recognized "legitimate" sports that are as suicidal to the participants as any of the modern versions of violence. Ice hockey is one, and anyone who has watched a game knows how bruising it can be. Lacrosse on the other hand is not as well known, but consider it a little like ice hockey on dry land. Victorious teams are determined by how many players can walk back off the field.

But for all these recognized sports, one must realize that they all have a modicum of "regulation." The really kooky sports are

engaged in by so few lunatics that anyone suggesting rules would probably just as soon engage in the activity. And you don't have to get hurt at kooky sports—but you might die!

Take the case of the sky diver. Now this sounds like the simplest thing in the world to do. All you need is a parachute, an airplane, sufficient altitude for the chute to spread its canopy properly, and one damned long prayer. It is, as one landlover says, the only sport where you only miss once. And that's final.

Not final quite as quickly, but probably just as certain in the eyes of an insurance actuary, is the gentle and noisy mayhem known in the wilds of the mountain country as steeplechase racing. The inexperienced buff may recognize this as the same name as that horsey nonsense at Aintree and the Irish Sweepstakes. This kind of "steeplechase" however is atop the roaring steed called a "hog," also known as beefed-up, souped-up motorcycle. The similarity between the Aintree version and the way the boys play it on mountainsides in the U. S. ends with the name.

It's really a simple race, like any other. The object is to leave at the starting line and finish somewhere else in as brief a time as possible. But there are no roads in a steeplechase (hog version). The course is laid out (as most of the competitors usually are after a while) over the sides, tops, and all the rubble you can imagine of a real honest-to-Everest mountain. Anything goes, but it's usually the riders who misjudge a river for a puddle, a rise in the road for a flat, and a left curve for a right. All of which doesn't matter in the long run anyway—the results are spectacularly the same: hospital or hearse!

Of course if the mountains leave you cold, you might try your hand at the land speed record. This is also a kind of race, but against the

clock. For obvious reasons the USAC dignitaries would never allow more than one nut at a time on the strand at Bonneville, and most often not even on the same day or week. Sometimes it takes that long to clear up the mess made by the guy who didn't make it just before you.

Bonneville is certainly an interesting place. In the past few years it's become so dangerous that even the ubiquitous scorpion has abandoned it to the roar of monster wheels. But most of the kooks traveling it never see it—they're going too fast, which is too damned fast for most of us.

Before leaving the realm of speed entirely, however, a word should be mentioned to the speed buffs who drive the aquaplanes—a water locomotion device consisting mainly of an engine on a roofing shingle. For them, the end is a poetic burial at sea.

It is not necessary, however, to go to sea to enjoy that kind of last rites. There are those who prefer the mixmaster version of "white water," a euphemism for the rapids of the Colorado River. They call it shooting the rapids, which, in another sense, is a fine expression for it. Almost any landlubber worth his Dramamine would gladly shoot the Colorado rapids—say with a five-megaton bomb!

So? Well, it's easy to see, for one thing, that if the craze to commit suicide ever hits anyone, he has a choice of land, sea, air, desert, and river.

But getting back to that kid of the future. What's he going to have to do in the same vein of violence? How about spaceship drags? Or maybe a little meteor-dodging contest? Or possibly a wild game of radiation chicken in which our future kid sees how long he and his pals can withstand cosmic bombardment? But that's getting grim, isn't it? Or is it? Anyone for Russian roulette?

HANK'S HAMMOCK



There is a little (well just in the right places) girl running around Hollywood these days who is driving most of the cameramen wild with the kooky and outlandish things she is capable of doing. Her name is Henrietta, and for sake of our tripple-tonguing, we call her Hank, a most inappropriate appellation for such a femininely female female, we admit.



Hank, if you'll excuse us, is an expert at everything in the physical vain. We mean expert. And not just plain old competent expert, we mean that everything

Hank does, she does in just that bit more difficult way. Take golf, for example. On the tee, this black-haired beauty doesn't just swing with a driver.

Not Hank. She takes a five iron and drives it two-hundred yards. Never takes more than one putt per green, either.

The same thing is true in every other sport. Naturally right handed, she bats lefty just to give the opposition a chance.

Same for Tennis, too.







And surprisingly this doesn't seem to bother Hank one little bit. She readily admits that she had had twelve dozen boy friends in as many days because she is so good, but now she's found something that keeps her the most popular girl in Tinseltown.



Hank has found the hammock. The hammock, that wisp of netting stretched between two trees and designed for relaxing, has become the most challenging thing in her life. Hank has at last found something that all the boys are better at than she is. And she likes it! But now she is getting ready to make the game more fun. How? By standing up in a hammock! C'mon, Hank, you gotta be kidding!













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Simon was what had become known as a legend in his own time. As a young man, he worked hard at his engineering profession, aspired to the top, and, many say, was ruthless enough to not let anything or anyone stand in his way. He had made it all right. At fifty, his fortune was measured in the tens of millions, his business interests ranged from heavy engineering to electronics and night-clubs, from aircraft manufacturing to motion pictures—and everything made still more money for Simon Breedwell. And what a waste, his army of hangers-on had said, since he would never walk again after the accident. Simon Breedwell was crippled, but more terrifying to him, he was impotent, left that way only a week after his marriage to Helen, five years ago.

The logic of his mind told him that to continue to hold Helen after all these years was both foolish and cruel. He realized the needs of the human for sexual love. Hadn't he enjoyed it plenty when he could? But even that thought

of justice and openness made him the angrier. He slammed the cigar down into the ashtray, pulverizing the expensive tobacco with his large hands.

His rage at himself continued as he was driven in silent luxury through the main streets of town and out into the country. His glares, however, went unnoticed by the crowds, even those who might have been sympathetic to his plight.

Helen Breedwell was seated in the library, sipping a brandy, when Simon wheeled himself in. She glanced up from the book she was reading, stared at her husband with stony silence and returned her gaze to the pages which for her were ever so much more fascinating.

"You might at least say 'hello' when I come in," he shouted.

"Hello."

"I know all about Ryer and you," he shouted, wheeling himself close to his wife. "I know all about your sordid little affair in a cheap hotel with a common mill-hand. Tell me, my dearest wife, is he that good? Does he titillate

your libido so delightfully that you can put up with such surroundings?"

"You're being vulgar, Simon," Helen said. "I don't know a thing you're talking about. What mill-hand?"

"Oh, go ahead and deny it. It really matters damned little to me. But it should bother you, dearest. It really should. I think I can get a divorce very quietly now, without fuss or bother of having to give you one damned red cent."

Helen looked at him for a long moment, trying to fathom the depth of his anger. No, she thought, he doesn't really know, doesn't really mean what he is saying. "But I would make a lot of fuss, Simon. I would make so much fuss that all your money couldn't buy my silence, all your legal eagles couldn't quiet this knowledge I have. You don't want a divorce, unless of course, you'd like to talk to the Internal Revenue people."

"You're bluffing. I have nothing to hide from the taxman."

Helen gave a soft laugh, throwing her head back in mock despair as she did. "Hadn't I full access to your accounts while you were laid up in the hospital? Don't you think I don't know every little maneuver you've made in the past five years? That's really funny, Simon. You see, I have my detectives too!"

Simon whirled around from the liquor table and glared at her. "I'll kill you, you bitch. So help me I'll kill you and that punk Ryer before you ever get a chance to say a word to anyone."

"By keeping me a prisoner here, Simon? That won't work, you know it. How could you kill your wife in her own home?"

Simon stared at her then grabbed his whiskey and, resting the glass in his lap, wheeled himself out of the room. Something could happen to her, he was thinking, something could be made to happen to her.

At eight, they dined in the massive hall, she at the opposite end of the fourteen-foot table, eating quietly and well of all the food that was brought in by the but-

ler. Simon looked at her long and hard, touching once his soup, and then letting everything else go untasted as he sipped his whiskey. The time would come, he found himself thinking, when she would drop her guard, when she would believe that he had been lulled into another state of gullibility. The thought cheered him and he began eating heartily. They said nothing more to each other that night.

The next morning, Simon called the young man in again. "Forget the whole thing, but keep following her and tell me where she is meeting this guy everytime. This is my private phone; use it at any hour, day or night. I can always be reached." He dismissed the young man and pondered his idea.

The weeks passed and, as Simon expected, Helen began seeing the man named Ryer again. This time they were meeting frequently at a better class hotel on the outskirts of town.

A month after Helen and Ryer had rekindled their affair, Simon told her he had to leave town. She seemed neither pleased at this prospect nor upset. Simon's businesses had often made him a traveler. But she suspected him.

It was really a simple plan. Simon would break into a board meeting with a distant smile of satisfaction on his face. It might have alarmed some of his associates, the smile that is, but good underlings all, they said nothing and deliberately avoided thinking about it.

Simon had a very simple plan. A man from Detroit would visit him that afternoon. The man had no name. The man would not even want to know Simon's name. But the man had a profession. He was a paid killer.

The man was not at all what Simon had expected. His dark suit was impeccably cut and he was much younger than Simon would have guessed, having come with the ultimate in recommendations, a personal note from the head of the state's vice racket. The unnamed man was efficient, asking only those details which would be pertinent to the assignment, the

description of the victim, client the unnamed man said, where to find her, and when. He left immediately, carrying with him the ten thousand dollars in small bills which Simon had paid him as his fee.

The man was highly efficient, but this particular assignment intrigued him much more than any other he had ever undertaken. In the same town, he was to meet another customer. Very rarely in his deadly career had he had the opportunity to do two assignments in the same place. The nature of his business was such that he made it a point to never remain around long enough to attract attention.

His instructions were to meet his second customer in a little restaurant at the edge of town. He was to ask for a table reserved for Jones, an obviously phony appellation, but in the years of his business he had become accustomed to the melodramatics of his customers. They were so unimaginative, he believed, because they were just not used to the deeds for which they had summoned him.

He had no difficulty finding the little restaurant. It was neither such a high class establishment as to be crowded, nor was it mundane enough to warrant reservations. He stepped inside and waited for the head waiter and glanced around the near empty dining floor, trying, with his experienced eye, to pick out the customer. For the first time he was somewhat baffled. None of the diners looked as though they were about to hire a professional killer. He gave the name to the headwaiter and was escorted to a back table behind a screen. He thought that this was going much too far. But he was not prepared to meet a woman.

"Sit down," she said, sipping her martini. "A drink?"

"No. A cup of coffee, waiter," he said and waited until the man had gone. "You called for my services. Simply tell me who, when and where. I don't care to hear anything more about it, neither about you nor about the reasons why. You must have good ones or

else why would I be here?"

"I didn't really expect to be so cold about it," the woman said. "You see, I'm Mrs. . . ."

The man closed her mouth with his large slender hand. "I said no names will be necessary from you. Just the 'client's' name, where I can find him, and when would be convenient to do the job."

"I have it all written down here," she said, handing him an envelope.

"The fee is enclosed?" the man said, hefting the envelope. The woman nodded. "Then I shall be going."

The woman stared after him thoughtfully, shut her eyes and went back to her drink. She suddenly felt like having more than just a drink. She ordered a telephone and called a suitable bed-mate.

An hour later, she stepped from the shower at the little motel and paraded her voluptuous body in front of the man she had called. He was impatient with her, however, and grabbed her by the legs and then lifted her into the bed. She exploded with passion for him and cried out in animal glee for the pure joy of the excitement! And that was how the man in the dark suit found them when he entered the room and put a silenced bullet through both their heads!

The woman looked strangely familiar, he thought, but he had still another assignment to accomplish. And then he knew that was not nearly so strange after all that he had been given two assignments in the same city. His neatly written instructions were to find a man in a wheel chair at a certain mansion on the outskirts of town and do what the ten thousand dollars had bought him to do.

He carried out his assignment and left town.

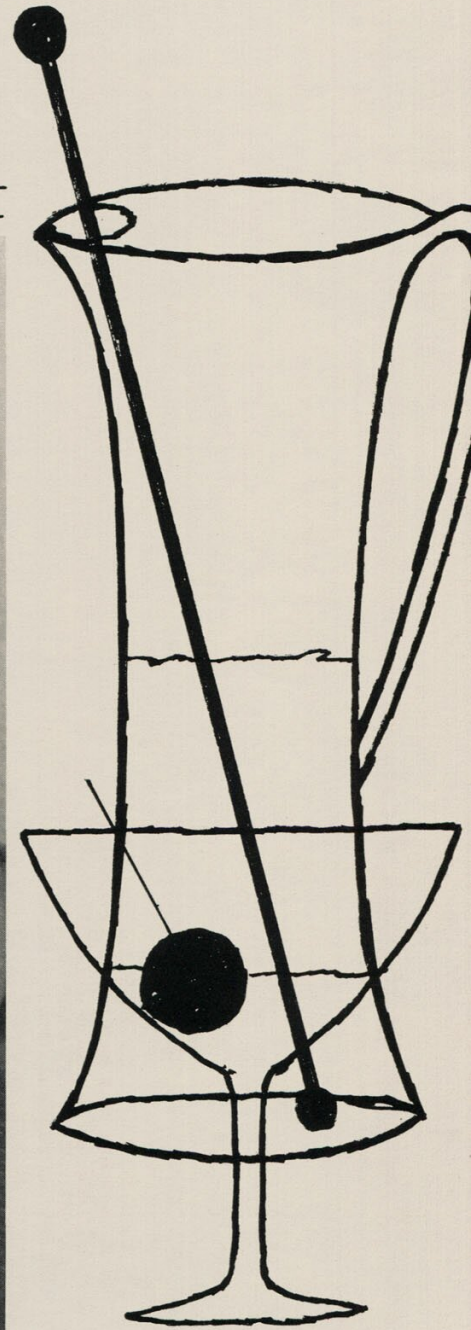
The next morning, the papers screamed the headlines of how a prominent citizen had been found dead in his expensive home, while on the other side of town, his wife's nude body had been discovered shot in the head. She had been with her lover who was also dead.

Don't Stir Without Stella

In the compleat bartender's guide, there is an old axiom that no manhattan should be mixed without the zingy dash of Ango stura. Now, we propose to go into anther axiom. And that's that no one should stir up a mess of cocktails without having Stella near.

The reasons are plain to see, easy to understand, not the least bit Freudian, but just slightly libidinous.

Stella as you may notice has a deep dark color to her hair, a most necessary attribute with which to lend those alluring highlights in the dimness of a tavern. She is also equipped. Long slim legs that make any drink (and drinker) stand up and take notice. Her pouting mouth is shaped just cupid's bow width, the better to savor a potent potable and other things of course!







And to top it off, as the barguide says, she has that stimulating manner that makes conversation easy with her, personality that would put the shyest of Lotharios at ease, and a young willing spirit that makes her the hit of every party. But it is not for joy alone that Stella is the necessary ingredient to any bash.











The truth is that Stella likes to stir around with the partying kind — just like us! In fact, she makes a highly lucrative career of it. You see, Stella is the only maitre d' hote in the world, which means that she's the gal one has to see before getting a table at the place she works. A more pleasant pursuit one is hard pressed to discover.

In the meantime, when the business of food and catering has slackened, Stella will be found sitting at the bar, yes! Just the way you see her now! Only it's our private bar — and no stags allowed!





EQUATION

**...in which love can be the
unknown factor defeating mathematics!**

"I can't understand it, Captain, everything has checked and double-checked against the automatic computers and guide systems. But we're a trifle overweight for making touchdown. You know what it's like at Trias."

Terion O'Brien slouched down in the contour lounge where he controlled the big ship. If the co-pilot Ragg was correct then they would have to start jettisoning a lot of important baggage. No, he thought, not a lot; but even the few ounces of valuable fuel material that he had been commissioned to run to Trias would be enough.

"One-hundred-twenty pounds?" It seemed an incredible amount to have escaped the initial check point, but then he had not given the ship an entire weight-in-space check. Would that have ever been necessary? He was at optimum weight at T-time.

The more remote possibilities began to cross his mind. Surely there was some kind of shelf in the navigational computers. Perhaps they had picked up a big hunk of meteor? But there had been no alarm in the six weeks they had been cruising.

"Have you checked out the circuitry on the 'puts'?"

"Of course, Captain. The very first thing. You know that's what I have to do immediately whenever there is a discrepancy in the equation. Obviously we must have made a cream-puff contact with a meteor, something heavy enough to clobber our weight ratio, but soft enough not to activate the alarms."

"Balls."

"Captain?"

"I can't see anything like that, Ragg," O'Brien said. "We'll have to make a complete re-check of the cargo. I think something might have been left over when they were loading. A hand dolly or an extra loading skid. It can't be too serious, I hope."

"How much time do we have, Captain? Shall I start the crew checking immediately?"

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Benched With Bernadine

One of the strangest tales of modeling fiction came from the very kissable sweet mouth of Bernadine Beaudreau, the lovely lissom lass who adorns the accompanying pages. Seems that as a model, she has been benched from the business for a month for telling about a secret society she belongs to: The Busomy Bench Warmers and Flirters Society!



"You're putting us on," we said during the interview with this curvy (39-24-36) bundle of charm.

"No indeed," she replied, lisping slightly through the olive of her martini. "You see it all started back in New York City where I was born. My mother met my father, who was a park bench painter. I mean, he painted park benches. Seems that one day mother saw him swinging his brush around a bench and, thinking he was a refugee from Greenwich Village, asked him if she could pose for him. Before he stop her, she sat down on his latest masterpiece, the wet paint bench. Well, one thing lead to another and after dinner that night, he married her."







But the bench society, we pleaded?

"Well," Bernadine breathed in the deepest most dulcet tones we've ever heard, "they're both dead now, so I've organized a group of other orphans who had a similar background. Now we meet every once in a while in Central Park or Griffith, depending on whether we're in New York or Los Angeles."



And?
"Oh! We just talk and flirt
with every guy who comes
along."
Why?
"Just funsies, you know!"
So we left Bernadine on the
bench! Like too much, man!









EQUATION

Continued from page 55

"We've got another forty-eight hours. Is that enough time to make a check? I've never had to make an in-flight inventory. Can you reach the cargo hatches easily enough?"

Ragg looked down at his clipboard, closed his eyes against the cold black and white of the cargo inventory. "I really don't know, Captain. The crew can make a complete inventory in about thirty hours, but suppose it's something on the outside, the impossible meteor which did not trigger the alarms?"

"Ragg, you've been with me for five years. In all that time, we've had to make but a single exterior check during a flight. And I suppose I don't have to remind you of what happened to the four men who made that check."

"Radiation poisoning, Captain. Yes, I did forget it for a moment. A terrible accident, but that was almost two years ago. We've got much better equipment now."

"We'll make the inventory check first, Ragg. Then we'll figure out what to do if the thing is outside." A wave of cold sweat swept over O'Brien as he remembered the charred bodies of the crewmen who had made the outside check in that other disastrous flight. He remembered with chill revulsion the peculiar kind

of charring that the mostly unknown radiations of deep space afflict on a section of human flesh, the translucent appearance of the men's flesh, the soft undulating glow that surrounded them before they were finally buried through the jettison hatch. But especially O'Brien remembered the decaying stench as the skin fell from their bones.

Ragg gave him a snappy salute and left without saying anything more. The Captain had been in a strangely distant mood even before they had lifted off from Earth, a mood very distinctively like an emotional problem. Wife trouble, Ragg thought, and quietly thanked his good fortune at not having that to worry about in the long trips between stars and that no-place called home.

As he walked through the artificial gravity on the catwalks between holds, Ragg thought of the precisely measured weight of the big ship, its fuel consumption analyzed to the last pound of retrothrust for a particular touchdown point, its cargo carefully designated for very special problem areas and allocated with all the precision frugality of the biggest think machines Earth's electronic wizards were capable of devising. No, he thought, it seemed quite inconceivable that the inventory

had been misweighed. It had to be something on the outside, a foreign thing, and, he thought, an unknown in a very carefully balanced equation. An unknown that meant certain disintegration in the heavy atmosphere of Trias because the machines had said that x amount of fuel was enough to safely land and take off from Trias carrying y amount of cargo. And the equation now read X plus one-hundred-twenty pounds.

Ragg summoned his subordinates, three astro-cadets on a training mission who had been military commanders at another time, but who were now considered much too valuable to muster out of the service entirely. He explained the situation.

One of the younger commanders grumbled about cutting a fuel supply so short as to eliminate the possibility of correcting any problem during flight. He was silenced by a curt word about economy from Ragg, reminded that the waste of war was inexcusable in peace, and that just quite possibly the war might have been ended sooner had certain military commanders been aware of the value of economy. The young man braced and said nothing more.

Ragg turned with a glum expression and led his contingent out of the wardroom and down to the maze of cargo hatches. Each carried a clipboard with appropriate checklists for each section of each hatch. The cargo was being quadruple checked with Ragg standing by. As the men went to specified sections of the main hatch, Ragg went over to the intercom.

"Captain, we've begun the check of the main hatch," he said in the cool, proper manner of addressing a superior officer. O'Brien acknowledged and signed off.

"Commander Ragg," the young officers who had been told off earlier shouted. "Commander Ragg, this way, sir."

Ragg ran down the companionway to the far end of the hatch and stopped abruptly.

She was huddled under a pile of blankets, a pretty girl of about nineteen. She might have been quite beautiful at one time earlier, but she was frightened at the sight of Ragg and the young officer. They, in turn, were almost too surprised to register anything but curiosity.

"What are you doing here?" Ragg's voice shook with anger mixed with fear. The girl was pretty. He let his strict military decorum slip and glanced down at the full ripeness of her body. Yes, she was quite pretty, even in the mechanic's coveralls which did not cover the tight swell of her breasts. "This is a cargo ship, and you've dared to come aboard. Do you know what the penalty for stowaways is? Do you?"

The girl shook her dark hair, her eyes widened, but her voice escaped her.

"Death," Ragg said quietly. "Come with me. We'll take you to the Captain."

The girl stood up and followed Ragg as he walked back toward the door. The three young officers stood by and watched, the youngest even smiling as he admired the girl's round hips and long legs. A quick look from Ragg told them they were dismissed. The plus-element of the equation had been found.

O'Brien saw them coming down the companionway through the visi-screen and began unbuckling his harness. He put the ship on automatic and waited for his copilot and the stowaway to reach the door.

"Come in," he said without waiting for Ragg's formal request for entry to the command post.

"Sir, I've come to report a stowaway," Ragg said.

"Obviously," O'Brien said sadly. Turning to the girl he said,

"Do you have a name? I'll have to enter it in the log. You realize, I suppose that stowaways must be jettisoned immediately."

The girl nodded. "The Commander told me. Captain, I'm sorry. I just didn't know that you'd throw me off. Do you have to?"

O'Brien looked at the girl more closely. She was so young, hardly more than the age of his own daughter. He turned to Ragg. "Leave us alone a while, Ragg. I want to get the full report. And thanks for a quick job of discovery. I'll make a note of it in my report."

Ragg saluted and left O'Brien and the girl. "Now, what is your name, Miss?"

"Sally Mennan. I'm sorry about stowing away," she said and her voice cracked into a deep shuddering sob. A fright filled her as the face of death, O'Brien's face, he felt, stared at her. O'Brien looked away.

"Sally," he began. "I'm sorry about it too. What made you do it? Don't you know that we have only enough fuel to make a landing at Trias at a specific weight? You are an extra that has not been counted. I'm afraid that there's nothing anyone can do about it." "Captain," she sobbed. I was frantic. I didn't know which way to turn. The last pioneer ship to Trias was too filled. My husband and baby were aboard. When they told me the quota had been filled, I thought I'd die. My baby, Captain. Don't you understand? They took my husband and baby and they wouldn't let me aboard. Some other girl must have taken my place accidentally."

O'Brien felt a twinge in his heart. He wondered if his wife, his runaway wife who had left him during his last leave, would have risked what this child had done for the man she loved. He thought too of his own daughter, pretty and safe in the arms of her new

husband and comfortable in their new house in an old suburb, secure and warm from the chill vacuum of uncharted space. He thought then of himself, Captain, adventurer, and lonesome old man of forty-five. Then he smiled as he turned to Sally.

"Don't cry, Sally," he said, putting his arms around her. "I have a young daughter about your age, but she's not adventurous like you. I want to do something for you, you would have been my own perfect mate, if we had met that long ago. Now, first, I want you to dry your face, put on some make-up and freshen yourself. You'll have dinner with me before . . ."

"... before I die? The condemned gets a last meal. Oh, Captain," she cried.

"Go," he said roughly. "And don't worry. I have a plan that will allow you to see your husband."

Her face lit up with sudden joy. But O'Brien would not let her say anything more. She left him standing by the control couch. Quite deliberately he flicked on the intercom. "Ragg, come in here immediately."

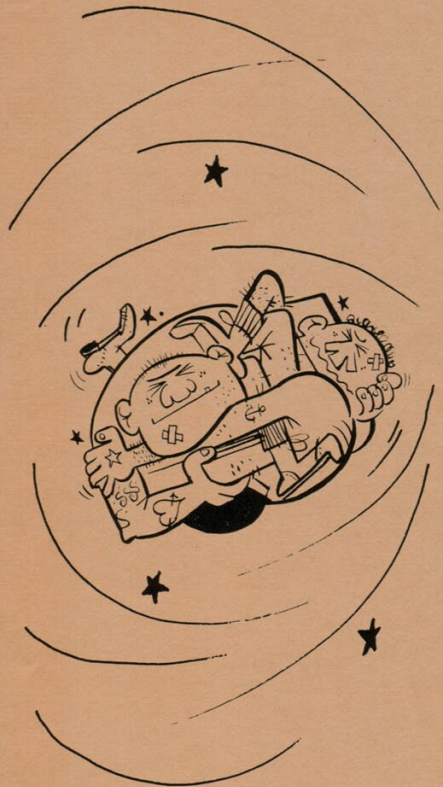
"...so, my trustworthy copilot, I have made up my mind," O'Brien said. "Treat her gently. She's had a rough time of it. And when you get back to Earth, tell them that I was just getting old and sentimental. Good-bye," he said and gave Ragg a salute. "You're in command now."

"You can't, Captain," Ragg shouted, grabbing O'Brien by the shoulder. "You're much too valuable."

"To whom, Ragg? Remember the equation? Somebody's got to go. And I no longer feel valuable to myself, and so I can't be to anyone."

O'Brien turned and walked briskly down to the jettison tube, opened the door and stepped inside. Death came instantly, solving the equation.

She Wants To Round Out A Well-Rounded Personality



Anne Evans wants to put the finishing touches to her personality. According to her, she's got about everything a young, single and experienced girl would want — independent income, a brand spanking new Mustang, a beautiful self-decorated pad in the exclusive Baldwin Hills district of Los Angeles and more than adequate personality and physical characteristics than she can handle.



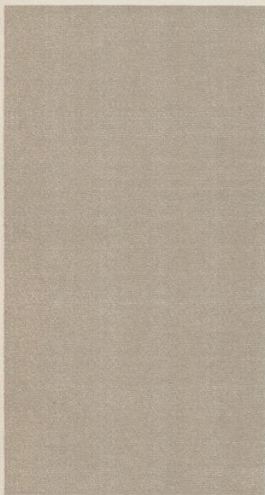


But, the two years she spent with her ex, a rather well-to-do and prominent physician, was in her words, "a waste of time." She wants diversity now and longs to make up for lost time. It seems that he was more fond of the twin engine Bonanza than her – something we can't quite understand – and was noticeably lacking in the "attention" department. His loss, though, is ours and the world's gain and 20 million bachelors are now open market for this delightful and provocative young miss.

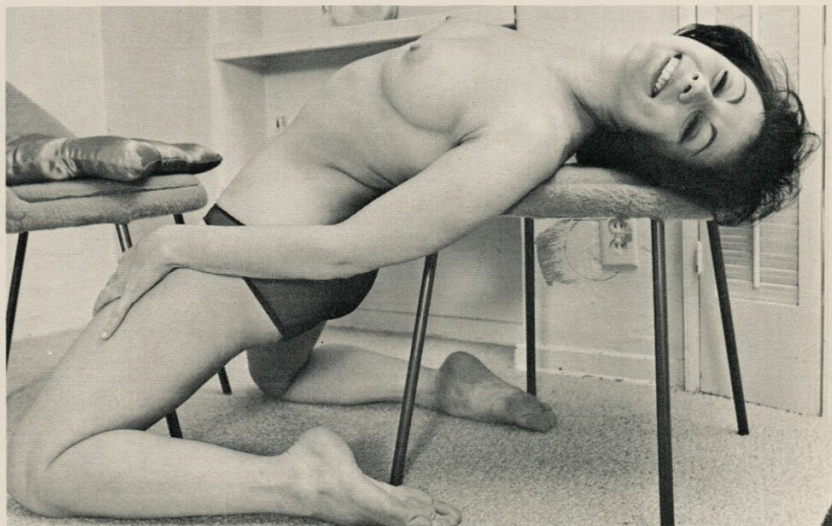








Free of the cares of domesticity, Anne is now setting her sights on taking the movie industry by storm, or failing that through the myopia of the moguls, she'll continue the rounds of bit parts in the great talent digester, television. There's no doubt however that Anne will get where she wants to — just look at the fancy baggage she carries around.





And, for that matter, who cares where she goes — if only she'd take one of us along? Surely there must be some lonely guy somewhere who can appreciate her fine qualities and help her round out her personality!









highball





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